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~~SECRET~~ PBSUCCESS RYBAT

DISPATCH NO. ~~X~~ HGG-A-883

*Lincoln*

CLASSIFICATION

TO : Lincoln

DATE: APR 9 1954

FROM : Chief of Station, Guatemala [ ] INFO: Chief, WHD

SUBJECT: GENERAL— Embassy Memoranda

SPECIFIC— Views of Major Victor M. ~~X~~ FIGUEROA G.

Attached for Lincoln and Headquarters is one copy each of a memorandum prepared by Andrew B. WARDLAW, First Secretary of Embassy, dated 5 April 1954 and concerning the above subject.

[ ]  
Clara M. Heagey

Enclosure:  
Memo, as noted

7 April 1954

CMH

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15 APR 1954

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:

DATE: April 5, 1954

Major Victor M. FIGUEROA G., Guatemalan Air  
Attaché to the other Central American Countries  
and Panama;

Andrew B. Wardlaw, First Secretary of Embassy

SUBJECT: Attitude of Guatemalan Army towards Present  
Political Situation in this Country.

Major Figueroa, with whom I have had conversations at social functions during the last year, called at the Embassy today to ask why he had not been able to obtain an export license for the shipment from the United States to Guatemala of a Cessna 180 light aircraft which he wished to have for his personal use. He explained that this plane was not for use in connection with his official mission here as Guatemalan Air Attaché in the other Central American countries. (It is known that previous efforts to obtain a license for the export of such an aircraft to Guatemala for use by Major Figueroa in his official capacity have been thwarted by the inability of the Guatemalan Government to obtain an export license.)

I told Major Figueroa that this question of licenses for light aircraft for private use had come up several times recently, and that Mr. Thomas J. Keane, who is now in charge of the local office of the Aviones Centroamericanos Ltda. which handles Cessna planes, had been very much concerned about his inability to obtain export licenses for planes he had sold in Guatemala. I said I did not know exactly what was back of this difficulty with export licenses but that I had already written Washington to find out. I assured Major Figueroa that there was absolutely nothing personal in the refusal of export licenses in his case.

Major Figueroa then broached the subject of the inability of the Guatemalan Army to obtain arms of any kind from the United States. He said that the Army is now in a desperate situation, that the peasants are being equipped with light weapons and that the Army has nothing with which it could cope with the armed peasants. He emphasized that the officers of the Army, with the exception of two or

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three who have gone into politics in a big way, are strongly anti-Communist but now find themselves trapped. He said that the real test in Guatemala will come with the choice of a successor to President ARBENZ; that the Army would resist the choice of CHARNAUD MacDonald or any other leftist for the position, but he feared such resistance would not be availing unless the Army should be allowed to obtain weapons from the United States. He stated that the Army's choice for the Presidency was Colonel DIAZ.

Major Figueroa begged that the United States reconsider its policy towards allowing shipments of arms to Guatemala since this policy was contrary to the interests of the United States as well as to that of Guatemala and its Army.

I asked him how the United States could know that if the Army had weapons it would use its influence to bring about a different political trend in the country since the Army in the past had had weapons and the present situation had developed. He said that in the past the officers had been blinded to the realities of the situation but that now they realized their mistake and wanted to correct it.

Major Figueroa added that the common soldiers did no thinking of their own but would always accept guidance from the officers.

I have on previous occasions noticed great variations in Major Figueroa's political expressions. On one occasion he seemed strongly anti-Communist and pro-American; somewhat later, shortly after his appointment as Air Attaché, he claimed he was anti-Communist but he followed the usual leftist political line in my conversation with him. Today his line was again anti-Communist and he professed the warmest friendship for the United States. Where he really stands, if anywhere, I do not know.

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